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ABSTRACT

This paper suggests a technique for the development, collection, and organization of materials that will aid learning through the use of the senses by building an environmental sense box. England is used as an example of a place that provides many sensory experiences which can be duplicated in such a box. The box can be made from a cardboard storage carton decorated with cutouts of the place to be studied. The contents of the box should include items which help students experience the place, such as photographs of a variety of people found in the country as well as natural and man-made features; tape recordings of street sounds, spoken language, radio and television programs, music, and environmental sounds; items such as cloth, which can be touched; things with a characteristic smell; and foods. (IS)

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ENVIRONMENTAL SENSE BOX:

A STRATEGY FOR HELPING ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS UNDERSTAND ABSTRACT ENVIRONMENTS THROUGH CONCRETE LEARNING ACTIVITIES

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Environmental Sense Box: A Strategy for Helping Elementary School Students Understand Abstract Environments Through Concrete Learning Activities

How does a place (city, state, country) look, sound, smell, feel and taste? Teachers attempting to provide global education experiences for their students should develop activities that will allow children to utilize as many of their senses as possible. This paper suggests a technique for the development, collection and organization of materials which will involve learning through the use of senses. The development and use of an Environmental Sense Box can be a rewarding experience for the teacher and students.

The starting point in the development of an Environmental Sense Box is to obtain a cardboard storage carton. The carton can be decorated in a manner which suggests the contents. To illustrate the writer will use the country of England as a sample environment. Therefore, the box could be decorated with cutouts of items normally associated with England. In the selection of items to be placed in the box, it should be kept in mind that the items will be used by the students (not displayed or demonstrated by the teacher) and they should be items which allow the students to use their senses. The following illustrates how items might be developed, selected and organized for exploration of England as a physical and social environment.

On the inside part of the box cover, a map of England should be attached. The items placed within the box should be coded on the map in terms of the place they were taken from and/or represent.

1. How does England look?

To provide opportunities for children to view examples of England, photographs could be taken of various locations within England or specific towns and cities. In some cases, students will probably be able to identify the locations as a result of having seen them in magazines or on television. The photos should display a variety of physical features, both natural and man-made. Also, a variety of people should be displayed which include both men and women. Questions could be attached to each photograph or group of photographs.

As a result of a recent trip to England, an elementary school teacher shared the following feelings about what is seen in London:

-- People! People! People! People of many nationalities. We are surprised at the many Indians from Asia, with men in Western clothing while the women are attired in the sari.

-- Clothing in a wide variety of styles - We see some really high fashions, blue jeans, pedal-pusher pants, and pleated slacks.

-- Traffic - cars, buses, cabs, cycles, bicycles whose riders appear dangerously close to traffic. And remember, one drives on the left side of the road and has steering wheel on the right side.

-- Large groups of school children walking with teachers, appearing to be on a field day. They are carrying their lunches and wearing uniforms. One group of girls wears blue-and-white checked dresses. It would sure solve the problem, "what do I wear today?"

-- Miles of attached, apartment-style buildings.

-- Shiny clean windows with lovely white lace curtains.

-- Factories
-- Old buildings and modern new ones. However, the new modern ones seem out-of-place.
-- Red double-decker buses.
-- Punk rockers with their slinky, skin-tight clothes, Mohawk haircuts, brightly-colored hair, and high heels.
-- "Bobbies" on many street corners (no guns).
-- Stone fences (We must have seen hundreds of miles of these).
-- Dense hedgerows, capable of keeping livestock in their home fields.
-- English-dressed horseriders jumping stone fences.

2. How does England sound?

While photographs are being taken, a tape recorder can be used to record the various sounds. As students view the photographs, the accompanying sounds of England can be played. Through discussion students can express their feelings about the various sounds.

The aforementioned elementary school teacher recorded the following sounds:

-- English language, but sounding rather differently from the English we hear in our country.
-- Many foreign languages, especially in London, where one hears visitors from all over the world speaking in their native tongues.
-- Traffic! Traffic! Traffic! It never ceases. Sirens, day and night.
-- Bells tolling from cathedrals.
-- Huge clocks striking.

-- The hissing of steam coming from tea kettles as people prepare their tea, hot chocolate, etc.

-- The roar of R.A.F. jets streaking across the sky.

-- Organs bursting forth into glorious, magnificent tones in the giant cathedrals.

-- Choir members lifting voices in praise.

-- Excellent educational programs on B.B.C.

-- Guides, mostly British, sharing their knowledge with tourists.

-- Sidewalk musicians, playing for money (cases opened, awaiting coins from passers-by),

-- Ooh! Ahh! Fabulous! Fantastic! Superb! Exquisite! Gorgeous!" as tourists see the various sites & sights.

-- Tour guide reciting Burn's "Address to the House" and Wordsworth's "The Daffodil". Delighted applause follows.

-- Cricket on T.V. People anxiously discuss the progress as a big match takes place between Britain and W. Indies.

-- Voice of Winston Churchill, recorded and on a tape the guide plays for us.

-- Pleasant greetings: "Hi, Love" "Hi, Lovely" "Hello, Dearie" "Watch your step, my Dear!"

-- "Bless you" whenever someone sneezes. (This apparently goes back to the time of plagues, when sneezing was an advance symptom and death wasn't far away).

-- Pure, unbroken silence along a lakeshore in the early morning.

-- Laughter and conversations in pubs, restaurants, on streets, and in the lovely public parks as families enjoy outings.

-- Piano music in lovely bar at Eastleigh Hotel.

-- Sounds of footsteps on the sidewalks below our hotel windows as people walk, even women alone, late at night in British cities. (Safety seems to prevail).

3. How does England feel?

The opportunity for children to touch items common the England can be provided by including items such as clothing. As with the photographs, questions could be attached to each item.

Once again, the elementary school teacher expressed the following regarding how England feels and her feelings about the environment:

-- Soft, cottony, enormous bath "blankets" (not towels).

-- Heavy all-wool blankets to keep one warm on coolish nights.

-- Plush springy carpets in our hotel.

-- Heavy china tea services in all our hotel rooms.

-- We see hot water bottles hanging behind bathroom door in our London Hotel. These would feel great in winter, but now now.

-- Delightfully cool air.

-- One feels relatively safe on the streets, actually safer than in American cities.

-- One feels frustrated because there are so many things to see and so little time.

-- One feels depressed at the Tower of London where so many tortures and executions took place. In fact, we stood at the exact spot where several members of royal families had been beheaded. Gory!!
-- One feels almost overwhelmed while gazing at the beautiful crown jewels.
-- One feels both a sense of gratitude and a sense of divine intervention because the magnificent universities and most cathedrals survived the German bombers of WWII.
-- One feels sadness at the thought of a government having to let the city of Coventry be bombed or let the Germans know they had broken their secret code.
-- One feels respect; and admiration for the British people who rebuilt so much of their nation after WWII.
-- One feels rough cobblestones underfoot while walking in medieval section of York. One can also walk on the smoother flat stones laid in parallel lines for ancient cart wheels.
-- One feels delicate "Bone China" and beautiful deeply-cut crystal.
-- One feels luxurious pure woolens, such as tartan plaids and sweaters.
-- One handles coins of a different money system.

4. How does England smell?

Many of the items included for touching can also be smelled. There are distinct odors from wool blankets. Children should not be encouraged to smell items that may be injurious to their health. As

with seeing, hearing and touching, the possibilities for smelling England are numerous.

Once again, our teacher suggests the following smells of England:

-- Fish & chips cooking along busy sidewalks.
-- Sweet and sour Oriental dishes beckoning from small stalls.
-- Sausages, ribs, etc., being grilled in open air stalls.
-- Hamburgers at Burger King and Wimpys.
-- Fragrant coffees and teas.
-- Yummy pastries.
-- Beef, mutton, and onions frying - to perhaps be used in pies (meat variety).
-- Fragrant little puffs of lemon yellow soap in our hotels.
-- Diesel fuel in cities.
-- Clean fresh air in the countryside.
-- Flowers! Flowers! More flowers!
-- Most impressive--the heather pot pourri I purchased. (Heather was just beginning to bloom, so we missed the fragrance which would come later).
-- Freshly mowed hay.
-- Manure being spread as fertilizer.
-- Burning straw as farmers clear the stubble from their grain fields.
-- Hog farms (and they smell the same as Nebraska hog farms).

5. How does England taste? With respect to England, this area is an easy one. Based on her experience, our teacher suggests the following:

-- Interesting and delicious meal starters (appetizers), such as cool sherbet and melon balls or hot spicy tomato soup with herbs.
-- Fragrant beef sauerbraten with rice.
-- Vegetables with every main meal, usually 2 plus potatoes (peas, corn, carrots daily, cabbage, parsnips, cauliflower, brussels sprouts).
-- Elegant desserts, such as Black Forest Mateaux (choc. cake with cherries) with whipped cream; English trifle (sherry-soaked sponge cake, plus creamy pudding, fruit, and whipped cream); currant cheesecake; crusty apple pie.
-- English roast beef and Yorkshire pudding.
-- Warm (but yummy) grapefruit sections baked with peaches, currants and courses brown sugar.
-- A bubbly drink, resembling our Mountain Dew, which English call lemonade.
-- English steak, very tender.
-- Bread pudding, chock full of currants.
-- Delicious, hearty brown bread, tasty butter, and slabs of pale yellow cheddar.
-- Chocolate bars and hard currant candies (tablets).
-- Tea (always hot), hot chocolate, or coffee, quickly made with the shiny chrome tea kettles found in our hotel rooms.
-- Small tea "biscuits" (more like our purchased short bread cookies) and chocolate-covered wafers to accompany afternoon tea.
-- Delicious pastries available in small bakeshops in both cities and villages.

-- Good strawberry, raspberry, and red or black currant preserves and jellies; plus the traditional orange marmalade we found <u>everywhere</u> at breakfast and tea time.

-- Elegant Chicken Supreme in Bianca, at our London hotel's dining room. It was a chicken breast prepared in vermouth, white wine, and creamed with mushrooms.

-- Yummy fudge and other sweets often served with rich dark coffee at end of dinner.

-- Tiny tea sandwiches--not too hearty, but welcome at a hotel stop on Sunday. (trimmed crusts: lettuce, tomato, cheese, or a bit of ham) served with hot tea.

-- Cream of leek and potato soup - mushroom soup.

-- Pork chops.

-- Great ice creams and wine gelatins.

-- Chandy (half beer and half bubbly lemonade).

-- Scrumpy (hard apple cider).

-- Clotted cream.

-- Scones with butter, clotted cream, and jams.

-- Slabs of English-roasted mutton.

-- McDonald's and Wimpy's hamburgers (restaurants were full of customers).

-- Bland salads at a beautiful salad bar.

-- Thick yellow cream poured on nearly all desserts (including cheesecake) and available for coffee or cereal too.

-- Hot milk to be used with either hot tea or <u>black</u>, strong coffee.

The preceeding suggestions for how England looks, sounds, smells, feels, and tastes are a limited sample. Many of those expressed by the teacher that recently experienced England would not be practical to include in an Environmental Sense Box to be used in a classroom. However, the items listed should be helpful in terms of considering the many possibilities for items that could be included in an Environmental Sense Box designed to help elementary school students understand an abstract environment through concrete learning activities.